WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method for enhancing streaming operation in a distributed communication system providing communication links between a plurality of stream servers, a client machine requesting a particular media file, and a stream server selection unit, comprising the steps of:

     retrieving a list of stream servers,

     evaluating the list of stream servers,

     selecting one of the stream servers on the list, and

     initiating streaming from the selected stream server.

2.   The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of retrieving a list of stream servers further comprises the step of getting the list of stream servers from a directory service.

3.   The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of evaluating the list of stream servers further includes the step of retrieving and considering the stream server's capabilities.

4.   The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of evaluating the list of stream servers further includes the step of retrieving and considering the player availability.

5.   The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of evaluating the list of stream servers further includes the step of retrieving and considering preferences from the client.

6.   The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of evaluating the list of stream servers further includes the step of retrieving and considering the client connectivity.

7.   The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of evaluating the list of stream servers further includes the step of weighting one or more considered parameters.

1   8.   The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of determining
2   whether or not the stream server can handle streaming of the requested media file.

1   9.   The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of determining
2   whether or not the format of the media file has changed.

1   10.   The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of determining
2   whether or not the quality of the media file is to high for the connection from the selected
3   stream server to the client machine.

1   11.   A method for enhancing streaming operation in a distributed communication
2   system providing communication links between a plurality of stream servers, a client
3   machine requesting a particular media file, and a stream server selection unit, comprising
4   the steps of:
5   detecting the data transfer rate between the client machine and the distributed
6   communication system,
7   intercepting a request for streaming a media file,
8   modifying the streaming request by appending preference information for
9   streaming of the requested media file, and
10   sending the modified streaming request to the stream server selection unit.

1   12.   The method according to claim 11, further comprising the initial step of detecting
2   the capabilities of the client machine.

1   13.   The method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of retrieving
2   preferences predetermined by a user of the client machine.

1   14.   A device for enhancing streaming operation in a distributed communication
2   system providing communication links between a plurality of stream servers, a client
3   machine requesting a particular media file, and a stream server selection unit, the device
4   being configured to perform a method according to claim 1.

1 15. A computer program product stored on a computer usable medium, comprising

2 computer readable program means for causing a computer to perform a method according

3 to claim 1.